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MUSIC AS WAR PROPAGANDA

DID MUSIC HELP WIN THE FIRST WORLD WAR?

A special ParlorSongs guest essay by K. A. Wells

Throughout World War I, music was a prominent feature on the home fronts and the battlefields. Most homes had a piano, and at least one member of each family knew how to play it, providing a common form of entertainment and socialization.

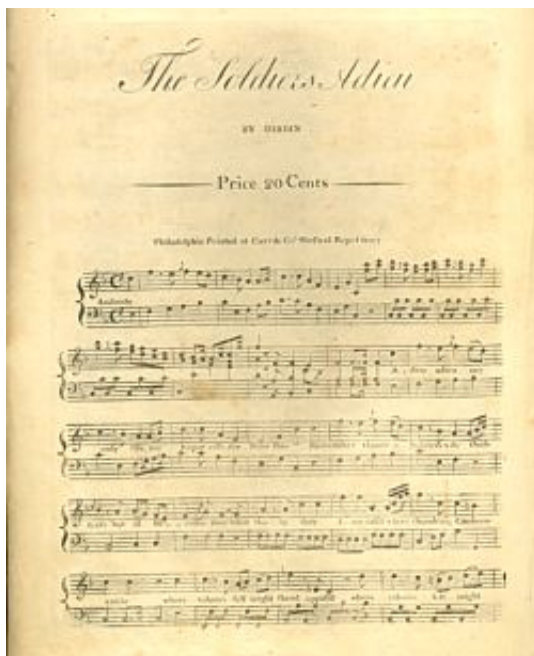
Popular music, therefore, saturated the citizenry and reached into all of its corners, forming a great medium for conveying messages. Recognizing this capability, governments often used it as an effective means for inspiring fervor, pride, patriotism, and action in the citizens in order to gain manpower, homeland support, and funds. Composers and publishers readily cooperated and adopted these new musical motifs with which to earn money from a large population rallied by war and eager to respond to the sentiments by purchasing the pro-war music. Besides these incentives, composers and publishers often wrote music to promote their personal wartime sentiments. Dramatic graphics and additional messages printed on sheet music provided extra inspiration to the messages expressed by the lyrics and melodies, markedly increasing their capabilities as propaganda vehicles. Music during World War I was often used to inspire passion and voluntary compliance in the listeners and, occasionally, shame in those who didn't support the war. Much of the music distributed during World War I greatly influenced social and political attitudes, thereby serving as an effective propaganda tool for private citizens and governments.

Propaganda is defined as "doctrines, ideas, arguments, facts, or allegations spread by deliberate effort through any medium of communication in order to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause" and as "a public action or display having the purpose or effect of furthering or hindering a cause." (Webster's, 1817, defs. 2 & 3) Oxford's American Dictionary defines propaganda as "publicity intended to spread ideas or information that will persuade or convince people." (Ehrlich, 718) Effective propaganda, therefore, relies its ability to be transmitted to large numbers of recipients in order to achieve its goal of attitude manipulation. The idea it contains must be received in such a way that the recipient feels as though his response to it is based entirely on his own thinking.

Based on these definitions, music is a highly effective propaganda vehicle. The widespread use and familiarity of popular songs enables them to function effectively as mediums for messages, and the context and conditions, such as the emotional climate during wartime, can be used for further enhancement. Music is adaptable, so the melodies, beats, and dynamics can be adjusted to reflect its message and enhance its impact on the listener. For example, politicians use musical fanfare at public rallies to build the momentum of the crowd and generate an emotional response in support of their causes, as is seen in political campaign songs and the protest songs of the 1960s and 1970s. In this way, music provides a weapon of social change which can be used to achieve specific goals because the lyrics, together with the melody and rhythms, take on different and more significant meanings than those that appear on the surface. By promoting ideas and, often, inviting the listener to sing along in groups as a shared experience, music helps achieve the goals of the propagandist. Besides the instantaneous

generation of emotions, the most effective propaganda songs have qualities that make them memorable while relaying their messages in a fashion that is not too emotionally extreme to be accepted. (War Songs, 1) Music permeates the spirit in ways that written words alone cannot do. It is readily retained in memory; therefore people who seldom engage in reading can be reached by music. This is especially evident in advertising and political campaigns when listeners go through their daily routines humming and singing catchy melodies that incorporate the praises of products and candidates. Songs published with the direct intent of improving morale, gaining support, collecting money, or encouraging recruiting are, therefore, propaganda. Propaganda is not always lies or distortion - even truths and facts can be considered propaganda if they are used for the purpose of promoting a cause. The value of music as propaganda, particularly for patriotic causes, is described well in the following quote:

"America's war songs and sea songs have played their part as incentives to patriotism, to enlistment in the ranks, to valor in the field and on the sea, and have served to inspire and cheer the fighting forces of the Republic. People of every nationality are moved to speech or to song by that which permeates the thoughts or appeals to the emotions in times of political excitement. Love of country, together with a pride in its institutions, be the latter of a primitive or more cultured form, smolders in the breast of all mankind. This latent spark when fanned into a blaze of fervor finds vent in speech and in song, which in turn inspires to action. Such is the birth of patriotic music. No country, as history proves, can afford to ignore the patriotic force capable of being brought into play through the power of music, either



in song or in instrumental form, both of which performed their part in inciting to action. It is said that some songs written by Charles



Dibdin had so potent an influence in war, that, in 1803, the British government engaged him to write a series of them 'to keep alive the national feelings against the French,' and his biographer relates the pertinent fact that "his engagement ceased with the war he thus assisted in bringing to a glorious close." (Hubbard, 101)

Dibdin's many war related works include, *The Soldier's Adieu* written sometime around 1797. Though written for Britain, as with

many English songs, it was brought across the sea and adopted by America, possibly the very foe that Dibdin was speaking of in the lyrics of this great early work. You can click on the music image or [here](#) to see and hear the [Scorch version](#) (printable) or [here](#) for the [midi version](#) and [here for the lyrics](#).

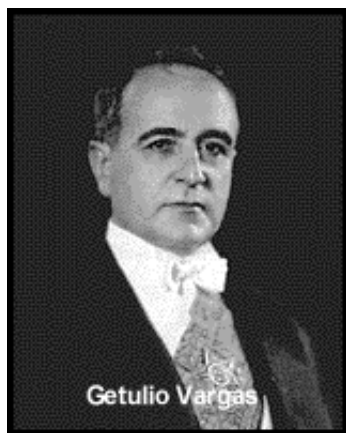
Some of the most obvious types of musical propaganda are found in patriotic songs, national anthems, and military music. The social necessity of having a national anthem began with England in the mid-1700s, followed by Spain and France later in the century. In 1845, the Bolivian president commissioned a composer to create a national anthem, which premiered that year at a state celebration commemorating a battle that led to the first well-defined boundary between Bolivia and Peru. The anthem was proudly performed by a military band in front of the governmental palace. On that same evening, in order to effectively reach the citizens with this message of musical nationalism, the anthem was performed in the municipal theater where it was sung by a five-part choral arrangement accompanied by an orchestra. These carefully orchestrated events served the government's purpose by proclaiming the sense of nationalism espoused in the anthem. (Turino, 175-179) Contests and folklore festivals were another common activity in nationalist programs, offering incentives such as money and prizes to contestants whose performances were shaped by their perceptions of what the judges wanted. Since the music performed at these events served to propagate the feelings of the organizers, observers were effectively exposed to musical presentations with directed messages, hence propaganda. (Turino, 185)

People of every nationality are moved to speech or to song by that which permeates the thoughts or appeals to the emotions in times of political excitement. This was brought to light vividly in the following quote just prior to World War I:

"Love of country, together with a pride in its institutions...smolders in the breast of all mankind. This latent spark when fanned into a blaze of fervor finds vent in ... song, which in turn inspires to action. Such is the birth of patriotic music. No country, as history proves, can afford to ignore the patriotic force capable of being brought into play through the power of music, either in song or in instrumental form, both of which performed their part in inciting to action." (Hubbard, 101)

Anti-government sentiments have also been effectively inserted into musical messages to relay a message of anger or shame at the government rather than national pride and cooperation.

Later in the 20th century, because of the proliferation of radio, the influence of music as propaganda was taken to even greater heights by nationalistic dictators,



In Brazil between 1930 and 1942, under President Getulio Vargas, a more overt method of musical propaganda was used by Brazil's Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP) when it hired famous musicians and lyricists to compose songs praising Vargas and the government. (Williams, 86; Dunn, 87) One such result is as follows: "Brazil, oh dear land, envied by the New World.

Getulio Vargas appeared, the great Brazilian leader, who among your children, as a hero, was the first (we) still keep in our memory." (Turino, 188)

The DIP encouraged composers to use popular songs to uplift people from their "marginalized or low-life culture (malandragem) and to set a good, productive example." Its goal of delivering propaganda in music was accomplished by offering payment to composers in exchange for the production of songs that propagated the messages of patriotism and nationalism which were desired by the government. Brazil and other Latin American countries also sponsored folkloric festivals with performance contests to encourage the development of music with nationalistic sentiments. (Turino, 189-192) Popular music served as a medium for delivering messages to the citizens in these countries. Using the benefit of an easily recognized popular music style, the samba beat was used in a piece touting the benefits of marriage, work, and children. The closing line of the song is"

"And if you are a father of four children
The president offers a prize.

It is a good deal to get married." (Turino, 188)

This popular music style was a good medium for propaganda because it was already familiar to most citizens and had an appeal across all class levels. (Dunn, 27)

In the 1930s and 1940s, the arts held a prominent place in the ideology and propaganda of National Socialism. In 1933, shortly after Hitler became chancellor, Schott published the *Badonviller Marsch*, Hitler's "official entrance music" (similar in meaning to the American President's *Hail to the Chief*) and put together a group of "hearth and home" songs with the title *German Homeland*. In 1934, Hermann Blume's *Adolf Hitler Fanfare* was published in a collection of marches. (Kowalke, 4-5) During the summer of 1942, Hitler suggested that propaganda broadcasts aimed at Britain and America should contain musical styles that appealed to those audiences, resulting in the use of popular music to deliver messages to other cultures. (Morton, 3) For instance, after the first regularly-worded verse of a song, a voice came on saying: "Here is Mr. Churchill's latest song." The melody was the familiar tune of *The Sheik of Araby*, a song enjoyed during the wartime by both British and American listeners, but the words that followed were different:

"I'm afraid of Germany, her planes are beating me.
At night, when I should sleep, into the Anderson I must creep.
Although I'm England's leading man, I'm led to the cellar by ten.
A leader in the cellar each night, that's the only damned way I can fight."

Using these altered lyrics, German government employees attempted to broadcast propaganda messages to their enemies using the language and musical style of those enemies. (Morton, 2) In 1944, a collection of fourteen songs published in Germany displayed a prominent dedication to Adolph Hitler and contained songs entitled *Praise to the Fuhrer* and *One Fuhrer, People, and Reich*. (Kowalke, 15-16)



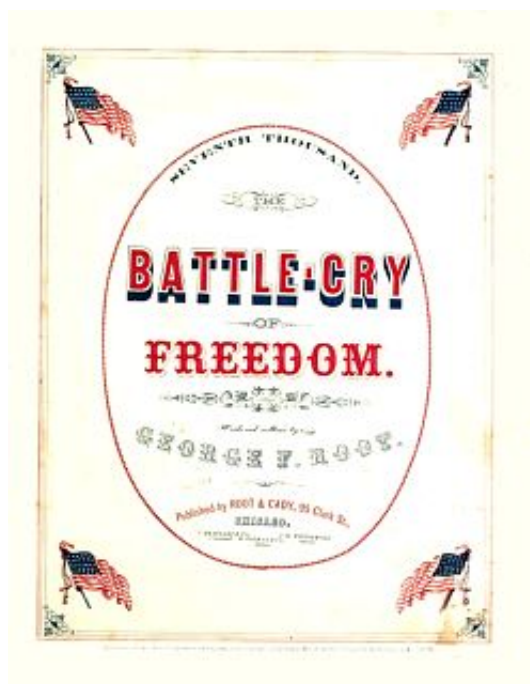
During World War II, popular music served as American government propaganda by helping to support preexisting cultural assumptions about the Japanese. Government officials understood the power of music and used it to mobilize the American people in support of the war against Japan. Images in the lyrics presented the contrast of an inferior Japan with a civilized and progressive United



States. Music composers and publishers, challenged to produce an enemy, used lyrics to dehumanize the Japanese during WWII. They sang of the struggle of the good (meaning Christian) Americans against an evil enemy, the "heathen" Japanese, referring to the attack at Pearl Harbor as a "sin" against both the United States and God. The lyrics in *When We Set that Rising Sun* (1945) proclaimed that Japan was "a land of heathen people" with "no respect for God or man." Using spiritual overtones in this way gave the Americans a reason to believe that the United States had a moral imperative to participate in the war. The issue of race predominated in anti-Japanese songs just as it had in those used against Germany. With Japan, however, the focus was on an entire

people rather than a segment, such as the Nazis, or particular leaders, such as Hitler. Sheet music covers furthered the propaganda images by suggesting a hierarchical relationship that likened Japan to a country full of naughty children who needed to be punished by the United States. Sheet music illustrations depicted tiny Japanese soldiers being spanked by a large, faceless hand or over the knee of Uncle Sam. (Moon, 333-339)

Frequently, propaganda songs are written to appeal to public discontent and urge action in a cause. Such was the case later in the 20th century when the lyrics of Bob Dylan's music inspired participation in the civil rights movement by emphasizing that no one should "turn his head" and ignore race discrimination. This type of music plays with the will and emotions of the listeners by inspiring them to believe that they have the power to make a difference if they get involved and take action in response to the new values and principles presented in the songs. Freedom Protest songs during the 1960s also carried this type of message, saying that the people were the solution to a social problem. The emotional impact of these songs was reinforced by unifying the audience through hand clapping and by call and response, a technique where the main vocalist sings a line and the audience repeats it. (Hitchcock, 487)

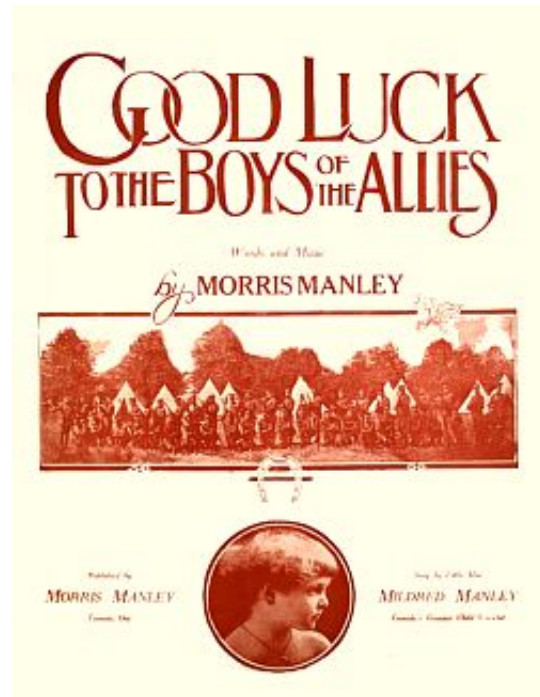


Referring to the success and the power of messages relayed by music, Abraham Lincoln gave the following compliment to composer George F. Root regarding his composition *The Battle Cry of Freedom*: "You have done more than a hundred generals and a thousand orators." (Hitchcock, 487) In more recent times, even Ronald Reagan's praise of the sentiment of Bruce Springsteen's song *Born in the U.S.A.* can be seen as a well-remembered attempt at musical nationalism. (Turino, 175) These are clear examples of governmental officials commending composers on the spectacular impact which the messages in their music had on the citizens, exhibiting the power of music to deliver propaganda.

Root's Battle cry Of Freedom is one of the greatest songs to emerge from the American Civil War. You can click on the music cover image or [here](#) to see and hear the [Scorch version](#) (printable) or here for the [midi version](#) and [here for the lyrics](#).

"In 1914, with the beginning of hostilities in Europe, war became a major theme in both professional and amateur musical compositions, and the possibilities for the promotion of propaganda and fund-raising for this new cause were heavily pursued. Songs became overwhelmingly patriotic, heroic, and jingoistic. Predictably many songs, (such as *Canadian Forever* and *The Pride of the World is the British Navy*,) were written to glorify the navy, the army, and the new flying corps. The American Legion, which was the Canadian 97th Battalion made up of

American volunteers eager to serve prior to America's entry into the war, was given a special boost in musical compositions. (Songs, such as *Give the Grand Old Flag a Hand*; *a British Song*,) lauded the British Empire, Great Britain, and Ireland's initial promise to give up its internal struggle for Home Rule during the war. Instrumental marches, recruiting songs, flag songs, and songs praising women's efforts on the home front (were abundant in the new repertoire of compositions. The Canadian Weekly of January 5, 1918, wrote about) Mrs. Florence Ballantyne, the daughter of the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature and wife of a university professor. As described in The Canada Weekly, January 5, 1918, she wrote her song *The Call We Must Obey* when recruiting lagged, to hearten her sons already overseas. (An additional recruitment song, *You Bet Your Life We All Will Go*, was written by The Rev. J. D. Morrow, the pastor of Dale Church, Toronto.) True to this message, the cover of his third composition, *Memories of Home* bears a picture of him in military uniform, described as "Chaplain to our Canadian Overseas Forces.' " ([Music on the Home Front Canadian Sheet Music of the First World War](#), Norman, Barbara, p.1, quoted passages used with kind permission of Library and Archives Canada) Among the many great war songs to come out of Canada was Morris Manley's *Good Luck to The Boys of the Allies*, published in 1915. You can click on the music cover image or here to see and hear the [Scorch version](#) (printable) or here for the [midi version](#) and [here for the lyrics](#). At the onset of World War I, songs were written urging men to join the military, and popular vocalists were hired to perform these songs at public recruiting rallies. A good example of a recruiting song used this way was *Your King and Country Want You*. Men who did not respond to this song by enlisting at the rally were publicly humiliated as they left by being handed white chicken feathers by children who had been assigned this task. The lyrics of this propaganda song were written as though they expressed the feelings of British women who were stoically urging their sweethearts to military service for protection of their homes and country. This one song, therefore, represents multiple propaganda messages beyond recruiting, such as producing shame in those who don't respond favorably to its patriotic message, and convincing the women of the land that they must be willing to sacrifice their men for the protection of home and country. (Songs 1-2)



"Lieutenant Gitz Rice, after being wounded in 1917, became the officer in charge of military entertainment for the Canadian Army." ([Norman, 1](#)) His compositions conveyed messages related to the soldiers, such as *He Will Always Remember the*

Little Things You Do, written to provide encouragement to women in their war efforts, and *Keep Your Head Down, Fritzie Boy*, which was written at the Battle of Ypres in 1918.. (Norman, 2) Among Rice's many battle related works was also the wonderful and patriotic song, *We Beat Them At The Marne* which directly tries to shout down the pacifists (see the lyrics). You can click on the music cover image or here to see and hear the [Scorch version](#) (printable) or here for the [midi version](#) and [here for the lyrics](#).



Intense pressure was exerted by both the government and society to enlist in the military during this wartime period, therefore recruiting was one of the main themes reflected in music. Non-serving young men were stigmatized as is evidenced by the following statement which composer John C. McFadden felt a need to print on his song *Liberty*: "Being unfit for the

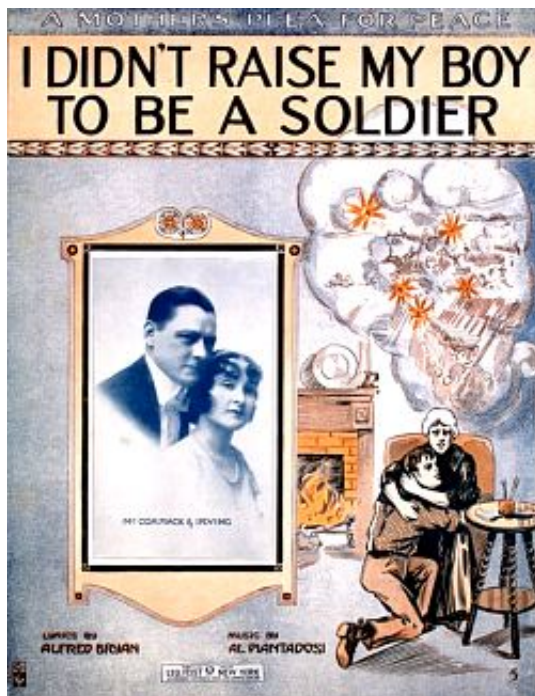
Fighting Front as my certificate shows..." (Norman, 3) Lyrics in music prompted those not enlisted to contribute money, as seen in the words of composer Walter St. J. Miller "If we cannot do the fighting we can pay." (*He's Doing His Bit - Are You?*) Canada's sheet music during World War I encouraged and praised volunteering for the military in songs such as *Where are the Boys Who'll Fight for Dear Old England* and *Our Empire Boys*. Conscription is rarely mentioned, with an exception being the following quote from *The Call for Soldiers*:

"My men sign now, For your King and country call.
Don't want to be forced to answer it, But step up one and all."

It's also rare to find songs opposing World War I in the National Library of Canada's collection. Songs produced in Quebec expressed the same messages and concerns as those from English Canada, except for, perhaps, less emphasis on the defense of the British Empire. The low cost of sheet music made it suitable for fund-raising, an effective way to promote support of the war, while at the same time spreading the music which contained pro-war messages. Spurred on by the war, the American public hungered for more patriotic-themed music, and composers grabbed the opportunity to write and publish their compositions to be sold for various patriotic causes. (Norman, 3)

Between mid-1914 and mid-1919, 35,600 American patriotic songs were copyrighted, and 7,300 were published, all available to stir the citizens' response to the war and the country. (Watkins,265) In response to the sinking of the Lusitania in 1915, American music publishers put messages in songs like *When the Lusitania Went Down*, preparing the citizens for an inevitable entry into World War I. (Watkins, 246) You can click on the music cover image or here to see and hear the [Scorch version](#) (printable) or here for the [midi version](#) and [here for the lyrics](#). Some songs encouraged a change in feelings in the American people, such as *In Time of Peace Prepare for War* which expressed a newly aroused martial spirit. President Wilson continued to affirm that "we are too proud to fight," and in 1916, he was reelected on the slogan "he kept us out of the war." In

response to the aforementioned martial songs, there were also anti-war propaganda songs, some in support of President Wilson, such as *Our Hats Off to You Mr. President*. Other anti-war songs used the appeal of "the voice of motherhood," such as [Don't Take My Darling Boy Away](#) (Scorch version). The message came through loud and clear in the title of *I Didn't Raise My Boy To Be a Soldier* (subtitled *A Mothers Plea for Peace*, respectfully dedicated to every Mother- everywhere"). The lyrics preached to mothers worldwide that if they

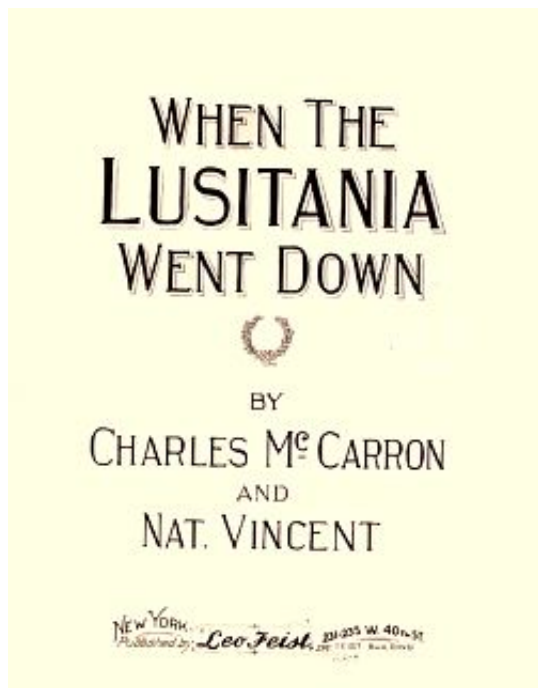


united in the cause, they could put an end to the fighting and save the lives of millions of young soldiers. This is especially noteworthy in this excerpt from the lyrics:

"There'd be no war today
If mothers all would say,
'I didn't raise my boy to be a soldier'."

The cover of the sheet music portrays exploding shells bursting around an old gray-haired woman protecting her son. This song adapted easily to a [ragtime form](#) (popular music style then) played by popular pianists, which enabled it to become widely disseminated, an important aspect of effective propaganda. In fact, the publisher Leo Feist "boasted that more than 700,000 copies were sold in the first eight weeks." You can click on the music cover image or here to

see and hear the [Scorch version](#) or here for the [midi version](#) and [here for the](#)



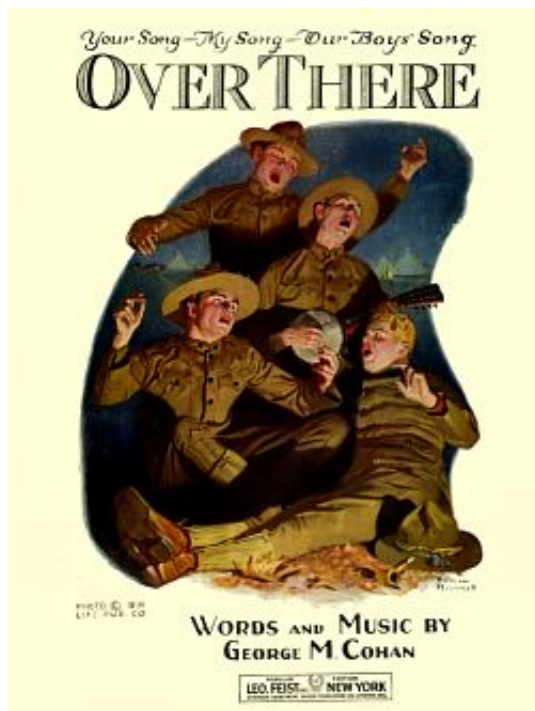
lyrics. An equally pacifist song entitled *Stay Down Here Where You Belong*. was written by the famous composer Irving Berlin. To create a stronger message for pacifism, these two anti-war songs were released on a single recording in March of 1915, and they met with high sales success until the United States entered the war in 1917. Since the dissemination of this anti-war music was being handled by those in the business of making money from their music, the reduction in sales caused by the unacceptability of being anti-war after April, 1917 caused the Victor Talking Machine Company to withdraw the recording. (Watkins, 248-249)

Political leanings determine much of a population's reaction to a genre, such as how they perceive it and are affected by it. With a major European war (1914-1918) stimulating a renewal of patriotism and national pride in the warring countries, there was a great opportunity for music to become the catalyst for governments to recruit soldiers, maintain enthusiasm among those in the military, encourage sacrifice from the population, and gain homeland support for the war effort. Encouragement of homeland morale was urged in songs like, [Everybody Do Your Bit](#) (Scorch) . Propaganda messages in the music project the power of involvement in a cause, the respect that others will have for your courage, power, and determination, and the self-respect that you will feel. Successful propaganda songs make you feel that you have no limits if you keep fighting for the right things as set forth in the songs, and they often stress that you are not alone in your fight. The emotions and body language of the performers add another element of persuasion to the message.



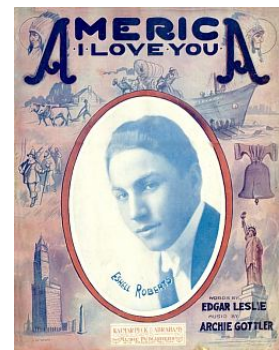
This music was written to encourage action and support for causes. The dynamics, harmony, and rhythms of the music also play a big part in its effects. Some music was written to cheer up the citizens and the soldiers in order to help them cope with or even overlook the horror and pain of war. Most World War I song lyrics did not clearly depict the realities of the war, but instead they gave the impression that everyone would be fine and that the war would end soon. (WWI sheet music,.3)

After declaring on April 16, 1917 that the American troops were joining in the war, President Wilson faced the task of swaying public opinion in favor of the conscription and mobilization of troops. Anti-war sentiment was still strong among the American citizens, and had been an important part of the foundation on which



Wilson was reelected. The day after Wilson's declaration of war against Germany, George M. Cohan composed *Over There*, a march containing lyrics that stressed patriotism and a sense of national identity. It was one of the most successful American pro-war propaganda songs, enthusiastically inspiring the American spirit of confidence about the ability of our troops to end the war and return home safely. Since it was a march, it was easily sung and enjoyed, and proved to be an effective propaganda tool at the onset of the war for recruiting and homeland support. It was publicly advertised that the royalties from this song were donated to war charities, so this music was of even more value as a pro-war tool. Being an all-American venture, one sheet music cover (one of several) was drawn by famous American artist, Norman Rockwell,

and it showed soldiers happily joined in song, sending the positive message of the effects of song on the troops, both from the standpoint of morale and of unity by singing together. *Over There* had gained so much popularity that Enrico Caruso, a world-famous singer, recorded it in both French and English, another good propaganda move. The song sold two million copies of sheet music and one million recordings by the time the war was over. The message from *Over There* was so effective that Cohan was later awarded a special Congressional Medal of Honor. You can click on the music cover image or here to see and hear the [Scorch version](#) (printable) or here for the [midi version](#) and [here for the lyrics](#). Here also is a terrific [MIDI version from an Ampico Piano](#) roll created by Terry Smythe. (Watkins, 257-259) By using a variety of methods to impress its patriotic messages in the minds of the citizens, *Over There* proved to be a versatile and far-reaching disseminator of pro-war propaganda. Inspired by this new spirit of pro-war enthusiasm, Americans eagerly accepted patriotic messages portrayed in songs, allowing them to serve as strong vehicles for propaganda. Anti-war messages were replaced with songs such as *I Did Not Raise My Boy to Be a Coward*, and *I'd Be Proud to Be the Mother of a Soldier*. Americans heard, responded enthusiastically to, and sang, *America, I Love You*, (click cover for the Scorch version, [here for midi](#) and [here for lyrics](#). Also, another great [piano roll version](#) from Terry Smythe. This one is taken from an Avtokrat Piano roll) *Under the American Flag*, and *We'll Never Let Our Old Flag Fall*. (Ewen, .231)





Besides overcoming a persistent anti-war sentiment, President Wilson had to deal with a large percentage of American citizens who were from other cultures, notably Germany, against whom we were fighting in the war. High on the government's agenda was the need to win the support of the citizenry for home front support and recruiting. Among the many early "call to arms" songs written right before the war or as the US entered the war was this stirring song, *Wake Up America* (click cover for the Scorch version, [here for midi](#) and [here for lyrics](#).) In 1917 the government formed a new agency entitled the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in order to sway public opinion in favor of the war and all that it might eventually involve. This was the crux of an extraordinary

propaganda campaign aimed at shaping public opinion in America in favor of the war effort. A progressive and influential journalist named George Creel was chosen to head the agency which employed 75,000 speakers ("four-minute men") hired to deliver patriotic messages to churches, music halls, schools, and other public places using music as one of their main modes of transport. (Ewen, 2-3). Songs written by government composers identified only as "Army Song Leaders" centered on addressing the cultural diversity of our citizens entering the United States Army linked by the common desire to win the war against Germany. An example of one of these songs is [Good Morning, Mr. Zip-Zip-Zip](#) (Scorch format) in which the lyrics show how the Army takes people from diverse groups and regiments them together for the same purpose. The "Zip-Zip-Zip" in the song title means that you can insert any name (first, middle, last) of any nationality, religion, or ethnic group. They are all taken equally. This is seen in the sample of the lyrics as follows:

*"We come from ev'ry quarter, From North, South, East, and West,
To clear the way to freedom, For the land we love the best.
We've left our occupations, And home, so far and dear,
But when the going's rather rough, We raise this song in cheer:
Good morning, Mister Zip-Zip-Zip, With your hair cut just as short as mine,
Good Morning, Mister Zip-Zip-Zip, You're surely looking fine!" (America to War 1B, 2)*

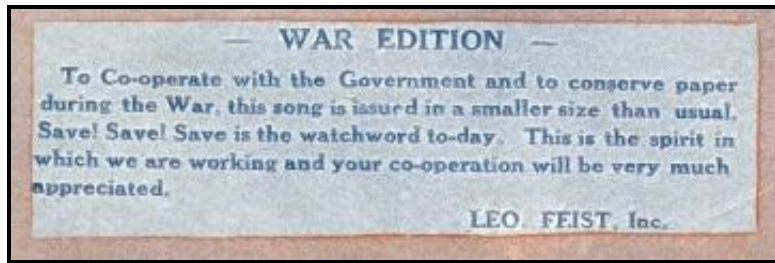
Songs played an important role in this abundance of propaganda. Song writers encouraged people to spend evenings singing war songs, and it became the patriotic thing to do at this time of the war. Citizens were urged to join together

in patriotic songs at home, in theaters, in arranged songfests, at community sings, and at Liberty Bond rallies. The CPI issued songbooks of patriotic music which were distributed to audiences in music halls to stimulate communal singing and build home-front morale, and special song leaders dispatched by the government visited the theaters to promote this activity. Each of the CPI's 19 domestic divisions centered its efforts on a particular type of propaganda, such as newspaper, academics, music, artists and filmmakers. The agency achieved its pro-war propaganda goals through well-planned emotional appeals and the demonizing of Germany, both successfully accomplished using musical lyrics, grotesque sketches on sheet music, and anti-German messages in the lyrics of sheet music. Confirming the veracity of this approach, Harold Lasswell, a renowned political scientist, wrote: "So great are the psychological resistances to war in modern nations that every war must appear to be a war of defense against a menacing, murderous aggressor. There must be no ambiguity about who the public is to hate." Atrocity stories about the enemy imply that war is only brutal when practiced by the enemy. (Delwiche, 2-4)

Government song leaders also paid visits to the troops and supplied them with patriotic songbooks, encouraging soldiers to sing many of the popular well-known marches and war songs. Occasionally they would update the songs with words such as *Down with the Kaiser*, to encourage a more positive morale among the soldiers. Many of those who entertained the troops attempted to alter the moods conveyed in the trench songs by making them into parodies, thus overriding their bitterness with a more carefree and optimistic attitude. John Philip Sousa, an American composer, was recruited to train young bandsmen at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. After completing this stint, he continued to provide patriotic inspiration with his music at Liberty Loan rallies and Red Cross relief drives. (Watkins, 267) Besides reinforcing a sense of patriotism in the soldiers through his marches, Sousa's music was successful in inspiring home land support at these rallies and drives.

During World War I, music publishers, such as Leo Feist, claimed that music would help win the war. (WWI Sheet Music #1, 1) Many music printers were available to publish "for the composer," and professional musicians were ready, willing, and able to polish or "arrange" any piece. (Norman, 1) American, Canadian, and British sheet music covers from World War I were equally impressive in the messages they projected, often displaying blatantly obvious patriotism, hatred for the enemy, and pleas for home front support, or a combination of these. (Watkins, 268) Sheet music was promoted in daily newspapers, and samples of newly published songs were printed in Sunday supplements, allowing wider dissemination and outreach for the musical messages of patriotism and encouragement. The graphics on sheet music covers aided their sales by featuring art that gave a visual boost to the

messages contained in the music. (Watkins, 268) During World War I, governmental influence was noted when music publishers issued their sheet music in a reduced format bearing the following patriotic message: "To cooperate with the government and to conserve paper during the war, this song is issued in a smaller



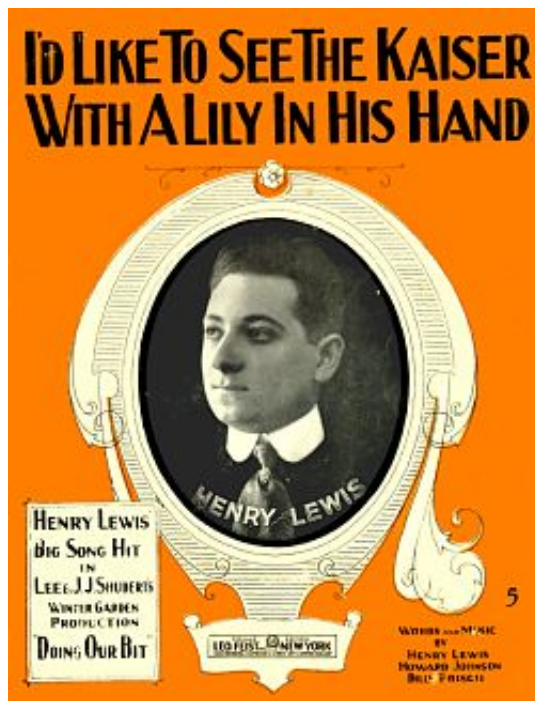
size than usual." Leo Feist's sheet music editions influenced purchasers by declaring: "Save! Save! Save is the watchword today. This is the spirit in which we are working and your cooperation

will be very much appreciated." (Watkins, 261) Many other publishers acted similarly, often using entire pages to present monographs about war music and to promote public support of the war effort. Publisher Joseph W. Stern frequently printed slogans and patriotic thoughts on his sheet music, such as "Food will win the war, don't waste it!" Clearly indicating that this music was written to evoke certain reactions, Joseph Stern developed six categories for World War I music, based on their purposes: "1) Cheer-Up Type, 2) Ballad Type, 3) Stirring march Type; 4) Appealing Type (appealing for support); 5) Comic Type; 6) Victory Type." (WWI sheet music # 1, 4-.5) Sheet music had thus become a formidable pro-war propaganda. With new and exciting subjects to illustrate, World War I became one of the most colorful periods of American sheet music. Images of Uncle Sam proliferated, and songs such as *Old Glory Over All* featured Uncle Sam, the Flag, and a sketch of large groups of men marching off to war. (WWI Sheet Music #2, 1) [Harry Von Tilzer's](#) *The Man Behind the Hammer and the Plow*," sang about the: "Mechanic and Engineer, all honest sons of toil, the backbone of the world today, The man who tills the soil, It's up to him to win the battle now." On the back of that sheet music was a copy of President Wilson's April 15, 1917 "Proclamation to the People" seeking support of our war effort. (WWI Sheet Music # 2, 3)

Female imagery was frequently employed in pro-war propaganda music. Frequently recurring themes dealt with mothers willing to sacrifice their sons for the benefit of the country *America, Here's My Boy* (click cover for the Scorch version, [here for midi](#) and [here for lyrics](#).) and a mother's patience and support of the war (*The Little Grey Mother Who Waits All Alone*). Much musical propaganda based on motherhood, however, centered on the value of the mother as a recruitment ploy in songs like *America needs You Like a Mother, Would You Turn Your Mother Down?* Another important image of the female in pro-war propaganda music portrayed the single woman waiting faithfully for her sweetheart while maintaining her faith in victory, heralded in songs such as *If He Can Fight Like He Can Love, Good Night, Germany!* An interestingly different focus in songs centered on women's wartime efforts, relaying the message that it was more acceptable for women to take on tasks which prior to this time were considered more masculine. As a result, this was a period when women began to acquire more freedoms, rights, and responsibilities, leading to a song which delivered a message to men regarding the potential roles of women in the postwar economy: *You'd Better Be Nice to Them Now*. (Watkins, 262-263)



The ranks of professional entertainers were greatly reduced because of enlistments and the draft, so theaters responded by devising new forms of public entertainment, such as song competitions in which newly written war songs were introduced by song promoters from [Tin Pan Alley](#) (the nickname given to the whole group of composers and publishers of popular music). The audience would vote for a winner from those songs. Tin Pan Alley met this increased demand for war songs with compositions covering a wide range of wartime subjects. Songs were written to stir up patriotism, arouse the fighting spirit, incite hate or contempt for the enemy, provide relief from war tensions, inspire hope and

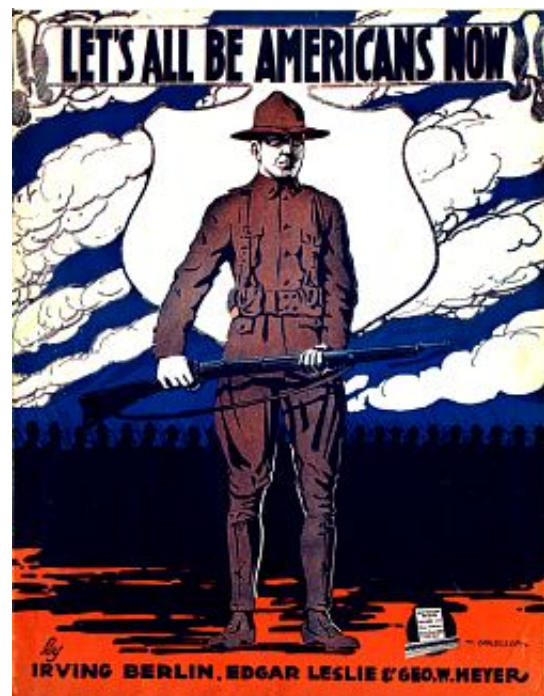


optimism, and glorify branches of the military. The Kaiser was always presented as the arch villain in this war with over a hundred anti-Kaiser songs produced by Tin Pan Alley, such as: *We Are Out for the Scalp of Mister Kaiser*, *We Want the Kaiser's Helmet Now*, and *We Will Make the Kaiser Wiser* (sung to the melody of *John Brown's Body*). Demonizing him further as the war continued, the Kaiser songs became even more savage, such as: *We're Going to Hang the Kaiser on the Linden Tree*, *We're Going to Whip the Kaiser*, *The Crazy Kaiser*, *I'd Like to See the Kaiser with a Lily in His Hand*, (click cover for the Scorch version, [here for midi](#) and [here for lyrics](#).) *We'll Give the Stars and Stripes to the Kaiser*, *If I Only Had My Razor Under the Kaiser's Chin*, *Shoot the*

Kaiser and *The Kaiser is a Devil*. The feeling ran so deep that even after the Armistice, hate songs continued about the Kaiser: *Hang the Kaiser to the Sour Apple Tree*, *We've Turned His Moustache Down*, *We Sure Got the Kaiser*, *We Did*, and *The Kaiser Now is Wiser*. (Ewen, 231-233)

Music composers, while entering the pro-war campaign for economic benefit, wrote songs which promoted the popular thinking aspired to by the government.

Irving Berlin, (who had formerly composed pacifist music), Edgar Leslie, and George W. Meyers released the patriotic song, *Let's All Be Americans Now*, (click cover for the Scorch version, [here for midi](#) and [here for lyrics](#).) which was immediately recorded by the American Quartet. The lyrics of this song reminded citizens about the ethnic diversity of the country while stressing the fact that all were joined nationally by citizenship. It encouraged all American citizens to put aside any previous loyalty to other homelands, and "fall in line/ You swore that you would,/ So be true to your vow,/ let's all be Americans now!" (Watkins, 251-252) Irving Berlin was recruited into the military in 1917, and a commanding officer requested that he write and produce an all-soldier show to raise



\$35,000 for a much-needed Service Center for the soldiers. Besides starring in the review, *Yip, Yip, Yaphank*, which was staged in 1918, Berlin wrote all the songs, sketches, dialogue, and dance routines. In one scene he played a whiny K.P. singing, "I scrub the dishes against my wishes to make this world safe for democracy." In another scene, dragging himself out of his cot in response to reville, Berlin sang [Oh, How I Hate to Get Up in the Morning](#), (Scorch format) which became one of the most successful comedy songs of WWI. The revue ended with a showy finale, *We're on Our Way to France*, with the entire cast dressed in full military dress as they depart for overseas duty. This play received a standing ovation after the final curtain, followed by a speech made by a member of the military, General Bell, in which he remarked about the impact of Berlin's musical as follows: "I have heard that Berlin is among the foremost songwriters in the world, and now I believe it." *Yip, Yip Yaphank* continued to play to capacity houses for 4 weeks and exceeded its original goal by earning \$83,000 for Camp Upton's Service Center. The show made a short tour of Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., after which time the sum had grown to over \$250,000. This military-themed musical was enjoyed by large numbers of people, modifying their perceptions of the war through its lighthearted approach to military life, while at the same time enabling people to feel that they were serving the war purpose by donating money for the benefit of the military. During war time, Berlin took no additional salary or royalties for anything connected with the show. After his discharge, however, he reaped great monetary rewards from the show's songs. (Ewen, 235-236)

From the beginning of America's entry into World War I, artistic forms of the Viennese operetta lost favor with the public because of Austria's alliance with the German empire. Offering an acceptable alternative, American musical theater grew rapidly to fill the void, providing another popular venue for dissemination of music with wartime messages. Opening in December, 1917, the Cohan Revue of 1918, featured a famous songstress performing *The Man Who Put the Germ in Germany*, with a chorus that begins and ends with a series of patriotic puns as follows:

*"We're proud of the WILL we found in Wilson
The man who put the US in USA...
But the world is now aflame, At the HELL in Wilhelm's name,
The man who put the GERM in Germany." (Watkins, 255)*

Referring to the troops who had departed for France, The Passing Show of 1917 had a highly emotional production number for the song, [Goodbye Broadway, Hello France](#), (Scorch format) which focused on repaying our debt to France for the assistance and support it had given us in the American Revolutionary War. (Watkins, 253) World War I propaganda music, was, therefore, very much a part of the Broadway musical theater with many musicals having martial titles and

themes, such as *Over the Top* and *Doing Our Bit*; and the musical *The Better 'Ole* (1918), which was based on Captain Bruce Bairns' experiences in the trenches. Many of the individual production numbers in revues and musical comedies assumed a pro-war military character. *The Ziegfield Follies of 1917* closed with a patriotic finale which began with Paul Revere's ride, included George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, and ended with President Wilson doing a review of the American troops. To add to the emotional stimulation, hence the propaganda value, for this final scene Victor Herbert wrote *Can't You Hear Your Country Calling*, which as Herbert's biographer, Edward N. Waters, wrote, "helped to whip the crowd to a high pitch of excitement." (Ewen, 235)

It is noteworthy that many of the songs reviewed above use "we" in the lyrics, an effective strategy that allows direct participation by those singing the song, plus the word "we" creates a group effort, a solidarity of thought and action, all goals of effective propaganda. Besides this approach, many WWI songs had a rousing martial ring accompanied by a strong patriotic message, such as: *We're Going Over, Just Like Washington Crossed the Delaware*, *General Pershing Will Cross the Rhine*, *We Don't Want the Bacon - What We Want Is a Piece of the Rhine*, *Keep Your Head Down Fritz Boy*, *Lafayette, We Hear You Calling*, *Your Country Needs You* and [*Liberty Bell, It's Time to Ring Again*](#). (Scorch format) These messages were purposefully effective in instilling the spirit of war in the consciousness of civilians. In 1918 the United States government banned "peace songs" as "comforting to the enemy," and governmental officials set up restrictions concerning which songs could be sent to overseas combatants. (Marks, 193) Restricting exposure to any specific types of music indicates that there's an expected effect from it on those who hear it, indicating that the music was clearly delivering a message which the government did not want people to hear, therefore making the deletion of the message into a propaganda move.

Throughout World War I, gigantic rallies accompanied by fanfares from marching bands and performances by famous singers urged the purchase of war bonds, providing propaganda that enabled the American mobilization effort to rely less on actual legislation and more on passions aroused by the messages in this music that led to voluntary compliance with the government's goals. (WWI, History Ch., 3) Victory songs, beneficial to the morale of both citizens and soldiers, were written by many composers during World War I. (WWI Sheet Music, # 3, .3) Patriotic music, especially at the onset of World War I, relayed an unrealistic view of the war to our soldiers and citizens. The lyrics described how the Germans would run away from our forces with hardly any American bullets being spent in the process. These songs were so filled with patriotism and bragging that soldiers were convinced they would have an easy time in this battle. Among the many optimistic flag waving songs published during the war was this great march song, *We'll Carry The Star Spangled Banner*



Thru The Trenches by Daisy M. Erd, a Yeoman in the Navy during the war. (click cover for the Scorch version, [here for midi](#) and [here for lyrics](#).) Youth and optimism ruled as the recruiting songs, especially marches, beckoned them with messages lauding the greatness of our homeland and denouncing the evil of the enemy over whom we would surely reign supreme. This military march-style music was designed to get the blood flowing and stir patriotism in these "going to war songs." (American Music, 6)

The importance of music in sending messages that boosted morale and support during the war was reflected by a writer for the *New York Evening Post* in August 1918 who

addressed the subject of the proliferation of pro-war music as follows:

"New Songs of War: Vulgar and Cheap? No doubt, they are often so...We can afford to have the people singing many shabby, faulty songs, along with better ones, but we could never afford to have them singing none at all."

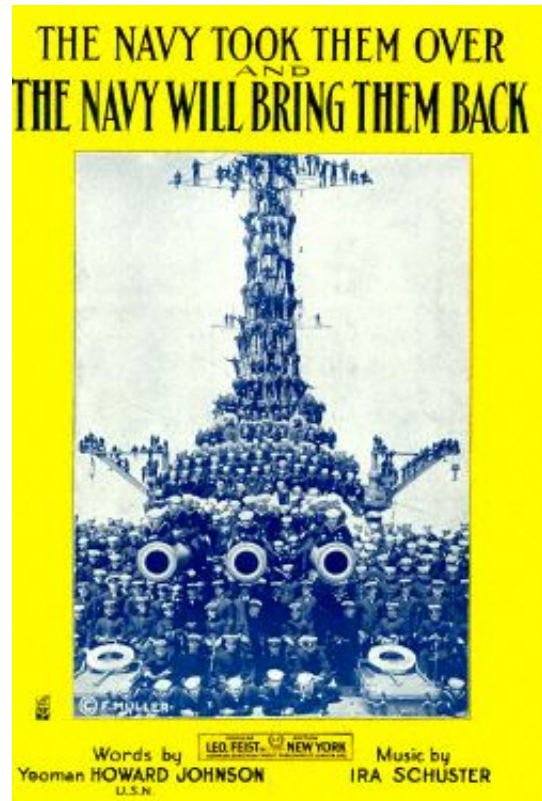
These "vulgar and cheap" songs were performed by many concert artists, both at bond rallies and in their more formal concert programs. Leonard Lieblich wrote in the *Musical Courier* of August, 1918 as follows: "Our nation is being stirred fundamentally at this moment, and the primitive and elemental, rather than the subtle and cultured emotions and impulses, (are) ready to react to the sentiment, written, spoken, or sung - especially sung." (Watkins, 264-265). Music was, therefore, seen as creating pro-war support and encouragement while maintaining emotional balance in the citizens, clearly goals contained in effective propaganda.

John Philip Sousa, in his memoir *Marching Along*, addressed the appeal of marching music as follows:

"I think Americans (and many other nationals for that matter) brighten at the tempo of a stirring march because it appeals to their fighting instincts. Like the beat of an African war drum, the march speaks to a fundamental rhythm in the human organization and is answered. A march stimulates every center of vitality, wakens the imagination and spurs patriotic impulses which may have been dormant for years. I can speak with confidence because I have seen men profoundly moved by a few measures of a really inspired march". (Moon, 347)

Addressing the same topic, during World War II, Rep. J. Parnell Thomas of New Jersey agreed with Sousa, noting that "what America needs today is a good 5 cent war song. The nation is literally crying for a good, peppy marching song, something with plenty of zip, ginger, and fire." (Moon, 347) Even further proof of the propaganda value of marches comes from Warren Dwight Allen, professor of music at Stanford University during World War II: "Marching calls for organization; a marching people must be united ... everyone must 'keep step'...and the march toward world unity is possible because of certain principles of musical organization that are closely akin to the principals of political unity." (Moon, 347)

As World War I drew toward its close, the music industry continued to churn out large numbers of patriotic songs, urging continued enthusiasm for the war in which the songs proclaimed that we would be victorious and should continue to back our brave troops, such as: *We're Going Through to Berlin*, *We are Going to Whip the Kaiser*, and *We Shall Never Surrender Old Glory*. (Watkins, 256) *The Navy Took Them over and the Navy Will Bring Them Back*, (click cover for the Scorch version, [here for midi](#) and [here for lyrics](#).) was a gesture to the men in blue on the high seas (Ewen, 235) When the soldiers returned home from the war, they soon discovered that while they were overseas fighting for the rights of those at home, profiteers on the home front had become rich from the war, many through sheet music, and the number of American millionaires had increased by four thousand. (Ewen, 237) Music proliferated as a propaganda form during World War I being written and played to achieve the pro-war behaviors and responses which the government, music composers, and music publishers desired from the citizens. Patriotic music was encouraged to maintain a heightened level of support throughout the war, and it also provided a new theme with which music composers and publishers could further their personal beliefs and economic goals. As shown by the vast amount of evidence in this paper, music, through its lyrics, dynamics and graphics has, throughout history, notably in World War I, instigated all of these reactions, and, therefore, qualifies as an effective form of propaganda. Perhaps Leo Feist's statement that music won the war cannot be verified, but it can be said with certainty that World War I has forever changed the face of music.



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That completes this month's feature and addition to our "In Search Of" series. We hope you've enjoyed this article and the music and will come back to explore more of our features and articles. A special thanks to K. Wells for submitting this well researched and cogent article.

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